

**Chapter 3**  
**Topic 3 Experiments**  
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**Activity: Research**  
**Carrying out a field experiment**

**Learning objectives**

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Identify key features of field experiments.
  - Evaluate the strengths and limitations of using field experiments.
- A. In pairs, conduct a field experiment to test this hypothesis: 'When asked for directions, females spend more time than males answering, regardless of the gender of the person asking'. You will need a stopwatch or timer.
- One of you approaches passers-by to ask directions. The other observes discreetly from a distance, timing and recording how long the interaction lasts. Keep the same roles throughout.
  - Make up a street or other place name. Ask five lone males and five lone females, preferably of a similar age. Always ask exactly the same question, using the same body language. You might want to rehearse this beforehand.
  - If the initial response is negative, follow up with 'I think it's near a supermarket' or similar.
  - Avoid ending the interaction yourself – let the subject do this.
- B. After completing your experiments, summarise your results. Do they support the hypothesis?
- C. Now compile the results for your whole class under the following headings: (a) questioner's gender; (b) respondent's gender; (c) duration of interaction.
- D. Do these results show any patterns? If so, how might you explain them?
- E. What practical, ethical or theoretical issues did you face? From your experience, how useful do you find field experiments?